




**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT
FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS**

FEELINGS OF ISOLATION

SEGMENT #4: COPING WITH STRESS



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The Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute

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A project administered by

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Professional Development Toolkit for New and Beginning Teachers



The PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS is a research-based video streamed program with accompanying resource documents. The program is an outgrowth of a previous Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) online mentoring study at Virginia Commonwealth University. The findings of the online mentoring study revealed twelve topics new and beginning teachers felt additional university training would have led them to more effective use of best practices in the classroom. In this program, each of the twelve topics is presented in two to six stand alone video segments. The total number of segments is forty five. Suggested uses, in addition to personal viewing by K-12 teachers for self improvement, include professional development, mentor and mentee, university prospective teacher, and small or large group training.

The facilitators are university faculty and practitioners with field experience. Each is currently involved in teacher training or serves as a staff development administrator. All are currently engaged in educational research, teaching and/or educational policy development.

The teachers in the video programs are classroom teachers. Some of them were participants in the 2006 Online Mentoring Study in which the topics for this project were identified. They represent all disciplines in K-12 grades.

Resource documents for the programs are provided as PDF files to facilitate the use of the 45 video segments. The first set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) an introduction to program facilitators, including a definition of each topic, and a list of the video segments, and (3) a research formative study summary that helped to guide the project's development. The second set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) a full text transcript for each video segment, (3) a set of problems and solutions related to each video segment in the form of a work-study guide, and (4) an annotated bibliographic summary of references and Internet links for each transcript. Many of the organizations and agencies referenced in the transcripts are actively involved in the development of video and professional development presentations that support policy and advocacy.

Every reasonable effort is made to present current and accurate information. Internet content, however, does appear, disappear and change over time. CEPI, as a university-based educational policy research institute endorses no specific position of any listed group.

FEELINGS OF ISOLATION

SEGMENT #4: COPING WITH STRESS



VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT

Feelings of Isolation: Feeling lonesome, anxious, and alone in classroom with limited resources and assistance. Having no clear-cut recipe or "how to do it" guide to manage an unexpected problem; or fear related to appearing incompetent to peers.

Facilitator: Dr. [Tammy Milby](#), Reading Faculty
Department of Teaching and Learning
School of Education
Virginia Commonwealth University

AUDIO	VIDEO
<p>Teachers today face many pressures and demands which influence life in the classroom. Self-efficacy can be defined as the extent to which a teacher believes that he/she has the ability or capacity to affect student performance in the classroom (Gates, 2007). Teachers with high self-efficacy are more positive and responsive, and students experience less stress.</p> <p>Welcome to this program! My name is Dr. Tammy Milby. I am on the faculty in the Department of Teaching & Learning at Virginia Commonwealth University. In this program, I will share tips for coping with stress that is a part of the profession of teaching.</p> <p>The two most common coping strategies employed by teachers are (1) seeking social support and (2) putting extra time and effort into work (Hastings & Bham, 2003) If you need resources to help make the demands of your job more manageable, talk to your mentor or seek administrative support. Other colleagues and your administration are eager to support you as much as possible as you develop in your teaching abilities.</p> <p>Keep in mind that you can only be an effective teacher if you are taking care of yourself personally. Consider the items in the following list. If you find that many of these items have been neglected in your practices recently, reevaluate and start taking care of yourself!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. See the humorous side of the situation and take yourself less seriously.2. Do things for others.3. Talk to other people and seek opportunities for social support4. Let go of being perfect - be honest with yourself and others	<p>DR. MILBY</p>

5. Develop healthy habits:
 - * Rest and take breaks, stretch
 - * Allow yourself to relax
 - * Use deep breathing
 - * Get more sleep
 - * Eat more nutritious meals
 - * Exercise
 - * Avoid excess (including alcohol)
6. Delegate and learn to say no
7. Stop solving everything for everyone
8. Find balance
 - *Ask yourself: What hours do I teach? How much time does it take me to prepare and grade? What time do I need for myself? What are my own personal commitments?
9. When things are not going well, reflect on the reason why. Don't be too hard on yourself. Learn from the experience and change it the next time. Seek professional growth opportunities such as conferences, book chats, and websites to reconnect with other teachers who are experiencing similar problems.
10. Celebrate and find joy in your career path. You are making such a difference for students everyday! Believe in yourself!

Next, let's hear some words of wisdom from our teachers about their first year experiences and beliefs about teaching.

My name is Jamie Baumgardner. I teach English in a middle school. This is my fourth year of teaching but my first with this school system. Teaching can definitely be a stressful job, especially for new teachers. However, there are ways to reduce the level of stress. One of the first things I have learned, is that the more organized I am, the less stressful my work. Planning in advance, having materials ready, and working daily to avoid letting paperwork accumulate are three best ways to cope with stress. Another piece of good advice is to not take things (especially student behavior) personally. Students have so much going on in their own lives these days that their behavior in the classroom and their behavior towards the teacher may not be intended at a given time. The students behavior should not be allowed to impact the teacher's personal or professional life. Sometimes that is easier said than done. Finally, someone once told me not to 'reinvent the wheel'. That means try to use other teachers' ideas or online resources to help with lesson planning. There is a lot of valuable information available if a teacher knows where to find it.

Although teaching can be, and often is a stressful job, it is also very rewarding when you see the difference you can make. When you see the growth and development of some students, your feelings about stressful times seem insignificant.

**JAMIE
BAUMGARDNER**

My name is William Berry. I am a second year social studies teacher at Tuckahoe Middle School. After only a little more than a year of work in the field of education, my personal philosophy of education has evolved more than it did in the five years I spent preparing for this profession. The core of my philosophy (and the cliché answer when asked about my educational beliefs), is "all students are capable of working and learning." This answer has remained constant. However, I have realized something very important about the teaching profession over the past year: Years down the road students will remember very little of what I have taught them (I'll be happy if they remember half of what we discuss in class). It sounds terrible, but in fact, once you realize this you'll become a better teacher.

**WILLIAM
BERRY**

What makes an outstanding teacher, is not just someone who can pass on knowledge to the students by being enthusiastic and using diverse lesson plans (which are essential), but someone who can serve as a role-model, a mentor, and a support system for all students. I have the utmost desire to see my students learn, understand how to study, and enjoy history as much as I do, but I know that a great teacher does more than just teach his or her content. A great teacher helps to set limits, gives directions, creates a desire to learn, and most importantly offers praise and support at the appropriate time. In today's world, this is especially important, as for many students, school is the only place where they receive this kind of help. Although I consider myself successful when a student gets a high score on a test, I feel the same way when a student practices responsibility, respect, truthfulness, or shows compassion for others. A great teacher knows that a love of teaching is not all that is required in this profession. One has to enjoy working with children as well, and not only help them become smarter and wiser, but also help them develop into better human beings. So next time you feel like a failure when a number of your students do poorly on an examination or assessment just remember that their obtaining high score on a test is not the only thing you are there to do as a teacher. Although you want all of your students to succeed academically, you also want them to become better human beings.

Believe in both yourself and your students. Find joy in your profession and bring that joy into your classroom. Remember, every day is a new opportunity to make a difference with your students.

DR. MILBY



PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Feelings of Isolation: Feeling lonesome, anxious, and alone in a classroom with limited resources and accessible assistance. Having no clear-cut recipe or "how to do it" guide to manage an unexpected problem; and fear of appearing incompetent to peers.

Ask yourself: What forms of support do you have as a new teacher? How are you dealing with isolation and stress in your job?

Suggested use for this module:

1. Analyze:

Please select one of the scenarios below and problem-solve a list of possible solutions. Record your ideas in the space provided. Discuss these ideas with your other educators (mentor, colleagues, or other beginning teachers).

2. View:

Watch the corresponding video on this topic. How does this information change your ideas?

3. Compare:

Revisit the scenario selected. Next, review the section entitled, "Possible Solutions" comparing the ideas listed with your own list.

4. Reflect:

How will you apply this new information to your current or future classroom? What goal will you set to help you begin to change your practices? What support is needed to help you accomplish this goal?

5. Apply:

List the first step towards change below. Create a timeline for success and place deadlines in your personal planner as a reminder. How will you know when you have met your goals?

Scenarios 1 & 2: Feelings of Isolation

Scenario 1:

Beth stated, "I'm exhausted and being so tired is actually affecting my performance in the classroom. I've started to notice that by the end of the week I was getting to a point where I was not functioning very well since I am running low on fuel. Things are getting to me that wouldn't have bothered me so much on Monday."

I noticed that the behavior of the kids has also been an issue. By the end of the week, things that I would have dealt with one way on Monday are escalating. I get so exhausted that the kids wind me up and this creates more stress as time goes along."

Consider this quote from Beth. How are her feelings influencing students? What suggestions do you have for her to improve her experiences?

Scenario 2:

Todd confessed, "What really gets to me more than anything else is not being able to take a break all day long. I have so many duties during lunch and planning time that I can hardly gobble down my sandwich and coffee. I shuffle down the hallways at a ridiculous speed trying to accomplish everything. I am beginning to feel like I live inside of my classroom."

Consider this quote from Todd. How is he coping with his responsibilities? What suggestions do you have to help him improve his situation?

Circle the scenario that you selected below:

Scenario 1

Scenario 2

Record a list of your own possible solutions here:

Summary & Goal Setting:

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Feelings of isolation and coping with stress are all normal parts of teaching. Teaching is a demanding profession which requires mental and physical strategies for tackling job stress. The first solution for most beginning teachers is to recognize your accomplishments and celebrate small successes. Conduct continuous self-evaluations and reevaluating what adjustments should be made in your teaching. Take on one thing to work on at a time. Remember, it gets much easier with time once you have established a repertoire of techniques for dealing with difficult situations. Your teaching mentor or another trusted teacher can help you cope and feel less isolated. Don't be afraid to talk to other teachers for support!

Here are 10 tips to help you rejuvenate and bring back your passion for teaching:

1. See the humorous side of the situation and take yourself less seriously
2. Do things for others
3. Talk to other people and seek opportunities for social support
4. Let go of being perfect- be honest with yourself and others
5. Develop healthy habits:
 - Rest and take breaks, stretch
 - Allow yourself to relax
 - Use deep breathing
 - Get more sleep
 - Eat more nutritious meals
 - Exercise
 - Avoid excess (including alcohol)
6. Delegate and learn to say 'no'
7. Stop solving everything for everyone
8. Find balance
 - Ask yourself: What hours do I teach? How much time does it take me to prepare and grade?
 - What time do I need for myself? What are my own personal commitments?
9. When things are not going well, reflect on the reason why. Don't be too hard on yourself. Learn from the experience and change it the next time. Seek professional growth opportunities such as

conferences, book chats, and websites to reconnect with other teacher who are experiencing similar problems

10. Celebrate and find joy in your career path. You are making such a difference for student's everyday! Believe in yourself!

a. ANNOTATED RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ❖ Beginning teachers contribute to their own isolation when they hesitate to ask for help. Many consider seeking help an admission of failure and incompetence. In fact, beginning teachers studied by Newberry (1978) went to great lengths to cover up serious problems with student discipline.

Gordon, Stephen. & Maxey, Susan. (2000). *How to help beginning teachers succeed*. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/23/95/64.pdf (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED34166)

- ❖ It is critical for new teachers to surround themselves with exemplary experienced colleagues. In most schools, teachers work in settings where the sociocultural context, if not the actual physical structure, encourages little interaction among adults and can contribute to feelings of isolation and frustration. This can limit a new teacher's maturation and stifle professional growth.

Hicks, Cathy, Glasglow, Neal & McNary, Sarah. (2005). *What successful mentors do*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, p.10.

- ❖ Isolation is a widespread and chronic problem among teachers. It is related to stress overload, stagnation, and burnout. Isolation is not restricted to particular types of schools or levels of education.

Gaikwad, Samuel & Brantley, Paul. (1992). *Teacher isolation: loneliness in the classroom*. Adventist Education. p. 14.

- ❖ Strategies for alleviating teacher isolation include developing a climate of trust within the school, sharing decision-making power, and using professional development activities to improve communication and team-building skills among teachers. Additional strategies to consider include forming quality circles or other problem-solving committees, presenting meetings focused on the daily activities of staff members, requiring peer observation, increasing opportunities for staff social activities, encouraging attendance at professional meetings, conducting retreats for sharing values and attitudes, and planning regular informal meetings to discuss teaching techniques or new ideas gleaned from the professional literature.

Rothbert, Robert. (1985). *Improving school climate and reducing teacher isolation*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 270855)

- ❖ Isolation comes in several forms:
 - Egg-crate isolation refers to a physical separateness where teachers have little contact with other professionals
 - Psychological isolation is a state of mind rather than a condition of the workplace. It involves the teacher's perceptions of collegial interactions.

- Adaptive isolation occurs when teachers are unable to meet the demands of adapting to new teaching strategies. They feel overwhelmed in trying to acquire new strategies.

Gaikwad, Samuel & Brantley, Paul. (1992). *Teacher isolation: loneliness in the classroom*.

Retrieved October 1, 2007, from

<http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/jae199254041404.pdf>

- ❖ In response to a high rate of attrition, many state education associations have begun to focus on solving the problem of teacher isolation through formal mentoring programs.

Heider, Kelly. (2005). Teacher isolation: how mentoring programs can help. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from <http://cie.asu.edu/volume8/number14/index.html>

- ❖ Studies have shown that mentoring programs such as telementoring, mentoring by a veteran teacher, novice teacher learning communities, and peer coaching help keep new teachers motivated and enthusiastic while increasing their skills and self-efficacy.

Heider, Kelly. (2005). Teacher isolation: how mentoring programs can help. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from <http://cie.asu.edu/volume8/number14/index.html>

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Gates, G. S. (2007). *Emerging Thought and Research on Student, Teacher, and Administrator Stress and Coping*. Charlotte, NC: IAP.

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Hastings, R. P. & Bhaam, M.S. (2003). The relationship between student behavior patterns and teacher burnout. *School Psychology International*, 24(1), p. 115-127.

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